

Not surprisingly, nearly all of the revisionists who spoke generally oppose tax relief and support tax increases. The same crew generally support spending increases and oppose spending cuts.

On the first point, two of the three speakers from the other side voted for the conference report for fiscal year 2010 budget resolution. The third speaker was not a Member of this body at that time the conference report was adopted. I am not aware, however, of his opposition to that budget which was drawn up by the Senate Democratic Caucus.

That budget was similar to President Obama's first budget. A core portion of that budget, much ballyhooed by the Democratic leadership, was an extension of the major portion of the bipartisan tax relief enacted during the period of 2001–2006. As a matter of fact, roughly 80 percent of the revenue loss from that legislation, much criticized by the three speakers yesterday afternoon, is contained in the budget that two of them voted for. Eighty percent is usually a pretty fair endorsement of any policy. Again, I have not heard the third speaker, the junior Senator from Minnesota, indicate that he doesn't support the tax relief included in the Democratic budget. Perhaps I missed something. In addition, the three speakers need to pay attention to analyses from the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation.

If they did examine those analyses, they would find that, in terms of the burden of taxation, the 2001 legislation redistributed the burden from lower income taxpayers to higher income taxpayers.

Now, I turn to the second fiscal revisionist history point. That point is that all of the "bad" fiscal history of this decade to date is attributable to the bipartisan tax relief plans.

In the debate so far, many on this side have pointed out some key, undeniable facts. We agree with the President on one key fact. The President inherited a big deficit and a lot of debt.

The antirecessionary spending, together with lower tax receipts, and the TARP activities has set a fiscal table of a deficit of \$1.2 trillion. That was on the President's desk when he took over the Oval Office on January 20, 2009. That is the highest deficit, as a percentage of the economy, in Post World War II history.

Not a pretty fiscal picture. And, as predicted several months ago, that fiscal picture got a lot uglier with the \$787 billion stimulus bill. So for the folks who saw that bill as an opportunity to "recover" America with government taking a larger share of the economy over the long term, I say congratulations.

For those who voted for the stimulus bill, including two of the three speakers to which I refer, they put us on the path to a bigger role for the government. Over a trillion dollars of new deficit spending was hidden in that bill.

The Congressional Budget Office concluded that the permanent fiscal impact of that bill totaled over \$2.5 trillion over 10 years. It caused some of the extra red ink. Supporters of that bill need to own up to the fiscal course they charted.

Now, to be sure, after the other side pushed through the stimulus bill and the second half of the \$700 billion of TARP money, CBO reestimated the baseline. A portion of this new red ink, upfront, is due to that reestimate.

The bottom line, however, is that reestimate occurred several weeks after the President and robust Democratic majorities took over the government. Decisions were made and the fiscal consequences followed.

Some on the other side who raises this point about the March CBO reestimate. That is fine. But, if they were to be consistent and intellectually honest, then they would have to acknowledge the CBO reestimate that occurred in 2001 after President Bush took office. The surplus went south because of economic conditions. The \$5.6 trillion number so often quoted by those on the other side was illusory.

The three members should go back and take a look at what CBO said at the time. According to CBO, for the first relevant fiscal year, the tax cut represented barely 14 percent of the total change in the budget. For instance, for the same period, increased appropriations outranked the tax cut by \$6 billion. So, spending above baseline, together with lower projected revenues, accounted for 86 percent of the change in the budget picture. Let me repeat that. Bipartisan tax relief was a minimal, 14-percent factor, in the change in the budget situation.

Over the long term, the tax cut was projected to account for 45 percent of the change in the budget picture. Stated another way, the 10-year surplus declined from \$5.6 trillion to \$1.6 trillion. Of that \$4.0 trillion change, the tax cut represented about \$1.7 trillion of the decline.

Let's take a look at the fiscal history before the financial meltdown hit. That conclusion is, again, in this decade, all fiscal problems are attributable to the widespread tax relief enacted in 2001, 2003, 2004, and 2006.

In 2001, President Bush came into office. He inherited an economy that was careening downhill. Investment started to go flat in 2000. The tech-fueled stock market bubble was bursting. Then came the economic shocks of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Add in the corporate scandals to that economic environment. And it is true, as fiscal year 2001 came to close, the projected surplus turned to a deficit. I referred to the net effects of some of these unforeseen events on the projected \$5.6 trillion surplus.

Now, yesterday afternoon's three speakers may so oppose bipartisan tax relief that they want to attribute all fiscal problems to the tax relief. The official scorekeepers show the facts to be different.

Those on this side of the aisle have a different view than the revisionists. In just the right time, the 2001 tax relief plan started to kick in. The fiscal facts show as the tax relief hits its full force in 2003, the deficits grew smaller. They grew smaller in amount. They grew smaller as a percentage of the economy. This pattern continued up through 2007.

If my comments were meant to be partisan shots, I could say this favorable fiscal path from 2003 to 2007 was the only period, aside from 6 months in 2001, where Republicans controlled the White House and the Congress.

But, unlike the fiscal history revisionists, I am not trying to make any partisan points. I am just trying to get to the fiscal facts.

So, let's get the fiscal history right.

In this decade, deficits went down after the tax relief plans were put in full effect. Deficits did start to trend back up after the financial meltdown hit. I doubt the fiscal history revisionists who spoke yesterday would say that bipartisan tax relief was the cause of the financial meltdown. So, aside from that unrelated bad macroeconomic development, the trend line showed revenues on the way back up.

But that is the past. We need to make sure we understand it. But what is most important is the future. People in our States send us here to deal with future policy. This budget debate should not be about Democrats flogging Republicans and vice-versa. The people don't send us here to flog one another, like partisan cartoon cut-out characters, over past policies. They don't send us here to endlessly point fingers of blame. Now, let's focus on the fiscal consequences of the budget that is before the Senate.

President Obama rightly focused us on the future with his eloquence during the campaign. I'd like to take a quote from the President's nomination acceptance speech:

We need a President who can face the threats of the future, not grasping at the ideas of the past.

President Obama was right.

We need a President, and I would add Congressmen and Senators, who can face the threats of the future. The legislation before us, as currently written, poses considerable threats to our fiscal future. It is too important to dodge. It is a bill that restructures one-sixth of the economy. It affects all of us and, more importantly, all of our constituents.

Grasping at ideas of the past or playing the partisan blame game will not deal with the threats to our fiscal future. Let's face the honest fiscal facts. Let's not revise fiscal history as we start this critical debate about the fiscal choices ahead of us. The people who send us here have a right to expect nothing less of us.

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Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority